critical digest

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This Week

Problem of traffic jams on matinee days in NYC came up for consideration by League of NY Theatres. It is suggested that curtain times be moved up to 2 PM with most shows ending at 4 30 PM instead of 5 PM. Thus matinee-goers would be able to miss the crush on all transportation that hits the mid-town area daily at 5 PM.

Plays

Maria Golovin, the Gian-Carlo Menotti opera presented in Europe this summer, will be seen at Beck Nov 5, produced by David Merrick-NBC-Byron Goldman. Franca Duval, Richard Cross, Patricia Neway head cast, staged by author... Say Darling is slated to move to Beck Dec 8... Patate cancelled Philadelphia tryout to allow Jed Horner, director who replaced H. C. Potter, to get Irwin Shaw adaption of Marcel Achard comedy ready for Oct 28 debut here. ... Flower Drum Song moved opening date to Dec 1... The Rivalry, Norman Corwin drama on Lincoln-Douglas debates, to open Feb 12 at Bijou, presented by Crawford-Schenker... Poker Game by George Panetta due Feb 17.

Players

George L Smith replaces Pat Hingle, Dark Top of Stairs... Vincent Gardenia leaving Visit to join Cold Wind and Warm... William Prince and Judson Laire added to Third Best Sport.. Oscar Homolka joins Rashomon... Geraldine Page may portray lead in Tennessee Williams Sweet Bird of Youth... Yasha Frank, age 57, producer of children's plays, died.

Playhouses

Beck next of City Investing Co. theatres to be renovated. Plans are also under consideration to tear down the Bijou to make way to enlarge the next door Morosco... ANTA and League of NY Theatres planning method of permanent installation of lighting equipment in all of NY playhouses.

Special Events

Ford Foundation grant of $200, 000 to New Dramatists to enable 10 promising playwrights to work on plays for as long as 2 years each and to see them produced set up. Deadline for nominations was Oct 15... Louis Lotito elected president of League of NY Theatres.

Theatre Book Notes

"The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker" published by Cambridge University Press ($10.50)

Calendar

World of Suzie Wong-Broadhurst 10/14. David Merrick-7 Arts Productions present Paul Osborn dramatization of Richard Mason novel, staged by Josh Logan with France Nuyen, William Shatner... Theatre National Populaire-Broadway- 10/14. S Hurok presents French repertory company in 3 week run starting with "Lorenzaccio" directed by and starring Gerald Philipe and Triomphe De L'Amour" directed by and starring Jean Vilar... Girls in 509 - Belasco 10/15. Alfred de Liagre, jr. presents new Howard Teichmann comedy with Imogene Coca, Peggy Wood, staged by Bretaigne Windust.

Family Reunion- Phoenix 10/20. Norris Houghton-T. Edward Hambleton open season with T.S. Eliot play, staged by Stuart Vaughan with Lillian Gish, Florence Reed, Fritz Weaver... Once More With Feeling - National 10/21. Gabel-Margolis present new comedy by Harry Kurnitz with Arlene Francis, Joseph Cotton, staged by George Axelrod... Pleasure of His Company-Longacre 10/22. Frederick Brisson-Playwrights Co present new comedy by Samuel Taylor and Cornelia Otis Skinner with Skinner, Cyril Ritchard, directed by Ritchard... Make A Million-Playhouse 10/23. Spector-Harris present new comedy by Norman Barasch-Carroll Moore starring Sam Levene.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Kermit Bloomgarden signed to create 2 live TV specials for NBC during next 2 years, including a TV production of Music Man... Helen Hayes to star on CBS -TV US Steel "One Red Rose for Christmas" Dec 17, via tape... Bob Laurence to present Philadelphia tryout reviews on WOR-NY "Music from Studio X ".

Theatre Film Notes

Eddie Hodges to leave Music Man to make "Home in Head" film with Frank Sinatra.

Other Broadways

Biltmore Theatre, Los Angeles, bought by Louis Lurie who will refurbish the 1600 seat house.

Winter Stock

Wonderful Town with Ted Scott and Jacqueline James will be presented at Paper Mill, NJ, Oct 14 for 6 week run.

Off Broadway

Lulu closed after 16 performances... Children of Darkness will close Nov 9 and will be followed at Circle by The Quare Fellow by Brendan Behan Nov 17... Diversions revue at Downtown Nov 7 to include in cast of 6- Tom Mollinaro, Aline Brown, Gubi Mann, Peter Feldman, Nancy Dussault, Sy Young.

Players Theatre is new name of Donald Goldman's Shakespearewrights which will open its new playhouse at 115 MacDougal St in Nov with King Lear... Many Loves which was due Oct 20 at Living Theatre postponed until Nov.... Jo Sullivan signed for a leading role in Of Mice and Men... Lambs to open series of new plays Oct 19 with Mr and Mistress, a comedy by Charles Curran... New one act play series to be presented Mon eves at Actors Playhouse starts Nov 10 with Penelope and Cytemnestra, both by Louis Lippa.

I'll Call You , a musical version of "Out of the Frying Pan" will be presented by Lyn Swann Feb 3 at Anderson. It was originally planned for Broadway.

Summer Playhouses

William Miles, producer of Stockbridge, Mass. Playhouse for 23 years has resigned to devote full time to his producer-writer assignment with Wilding Pictures, NYC.

Yiddish Theatre

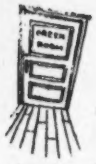
New season opens this week with Nice People , a new musical play with book by Louis Freiman, music by Sholom Secunda featuring Irving Jacobson, Diana Goldberg at Downtown National Oct 18. Also A Family Mishmash, a new musical with book by Israel Rosenberg, music by Abe Ellstein, lyrics by Jacob Jacobs with Leo Fuchs and Yetta Zwerling at Anderson Oct 18.

Church Drama

Players West production of Capt. Brassbound's Conversion at Grace & St Paul's Lutheran Church, 121 W 71 playing 9 15 PM Fri show, plus Sat and Sun performances... Listen to the Quiet by Fred Scollay to be presented at Blackfriars Oct 27.

College Theatre

Playmakers Guild of Florida A & M Univ to tour Africa for 2 months with 10 actors doing 4 plays.



GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

MCCORD TRIBUTE... Leading Broadway actors joined "Drama Desk" members in paying tribute to Bert McCord, Herald Tribune drama columnist for past 18 years, who is retiring. Included were Robert Preston, David Wayne, Ralph Bellamy, Alfred Drake and Gene Kelly. Preston made note that he will always remember McCord, the Jack Kerouac of the Ivy League, author of the "Drharma Bums." Other guests of the Oct. "Drama Desk" meeting included Josh Logan, David Merrick and Pat Susuki.

COLUMN TIPS... 4 summer stock companies foled last month leaving a great many actors stranded and holding the bag for $60,000 in checks, reports Winchell, Mirror... A London paper has offered Orson Welles the job of drama critic, hears Walker, News .... Neither Ezra Stone nor Jerome Chodorov, who replaced him as director of Make a Million, wants his name used on credit lists, notes Farrell, World Telegram & Sun... Peter Ustinov asking 22% of the gross for directing and starring in his new play, repeats Kilgallen, Journal American.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Fond memories of favorite Yiddish actors who appeared on Second Avenue recalled by Times reader who is saddened that the Second Avenue Theatre section is being "demolished."... Extensive poll of theatre audiences suggested on subject of smoking in theatres before any laws are switched, urges "C. D." subscriber.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Theatre may out-price itself if it goes above the current $7-$8 top, John Shubert said at stockholders meeting of Select Theatre Corp, reports Variety... Handful of Fire would have won even less kindly notices if it opened the day after Touch of A Poet instead of before it, bets Watts, Post... Audience members at Toronto debut of Sean o'Casey's Cock-a-Doodle Dandy who shouted "you're a liar" and urged others to leave were tabbed by the playwright as rude people with bad manners. Author contends incidents in play are based on fact.

WHO'S NUDE... Should an actress give her altogether for art asks Gelman, Post, after considering case of Lelia Barry who quit forthcoming Maxwell Anderson Off Broadway play The Golden Six and who was replaced by Avra Petrides. Script concerning Roman history from 14 AM to 39 AD includes 2 scenes in which the Roman emperor orders a Greek virgin slave girl to disrobe to the waist for inspection. The girl complies. Barry thought emperor and author was going to far and quit. Anderson is reported ready to fight any possible censorship from NYC License Commissioner.

SECOND GUESSES... Touch of a Poet directed with a masterly hand by a superb company of actors, applauds Chapman, News... O'Neill play shows American theatre at its best again in production so outstandingly staged by Harold Clurman, agrees Watts, Post... Play is likely to be played more often than other O'Neill dramas because of the superbly written roles, notes Whittaker, Herald Tribune... Some extraordinary actors give a stunning performance, under Clurman's driving direction, concludes Atkinson, Times.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Rosemary Harris, The Disenchanted, reads reviews of her shows about 2 weeks after the opening, she told McClain, Journal American. If they are good she would become self-conscious, if bad absolutely desolate. English actress was surprised to be interviewed by critic, for in England an actress never talks to the "enemy."... The play rather than the performer is the thing, Jean Vilar, Theatre National Populaire producer-director-actor told Crist, Herald Tribune. The dramatic elements of the plays in repertory are re-inforced by an open stage, platford extensions, few but oversized props, extensive lighting effects and musical accompaniment.

Drink To Me Only is an enjoyable, minor key, literate comedy farce. Tom Poston does a remarkable fun-filled job in a role that easily could have become overdone and obnoxious. With sole exception of Paul Hartman entire cast of comedians under expert direction of George Abbott make pleasant comedy seem much more hilarious than it probably is. Relaxing is probably best way to sum up the entire evening.

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Ivanov is a brilliant drama presented by a fine company who approach the nearest NY, on or Off Broadway, has to offer in ensemble acting. Excellent direction plus accomplished actors focused on a difficult script result in a perfect Off Broadway item that does not seem to have a single fault.

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Deathwatch presents a sad, sick commentary on modern literature if this Jean Genet drama is taken as an example of good theatre. Illness of author expounded at length in non-dramatic form presenting obscene thoughts and actions onstage seem to be another example of drama more at home in the psychiatrist's office than on a stage.

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Consideration of matinee day traffic jams by switching starting times to 2 PM as approached by the League of NY Theatres is only going to be of value if stage managers and producers start their shows at the advertised times. Though anxious out-of-town playgoers gather at the theatres anywhere from 30 minutes to 60 minutes prior to curtain. time, they usually have to wait from 10 to 20 minutes past the advertised curtain time for the play to start. This is true, for the most part, of both matinee and evening performances. Until theatre fans are insured that advertised curtain times mean what they say, any scheme to solve mid-town traffic jams is merely wishful thinking.

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The possiblity of the charming Bijou Theatre being torn down to enlarge the Morosco Theatre is hardly a happy thought for anyone except the building contractor. When and if the promised new playhouses at Lincoln Square and other developments are ever built, they will be of gigantic size. Many plays, including the fore-mentioned Drink To Me Only, would be more delightful in such an intimate house as the Bijou. Economics of the theatre are making the possibility of earning a profit in such a tiny house very difficult. But until new theatres, big and little, are opened, it seems a sin to destroy such a beautiful playhouse.

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New York theatre fans didn't have to go the Brussels World Fair this summer, for the best of the theatre presentations is coming to New York. Jerome Robbins' jazz ballet and now the Gian Carlo Menotti opera, re-labeled a musical drama, prove without a doubt that NYC is the theatre capitol of the world.

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Ford Foundations continuing interest in the development of US drama, both actors and playwrights and theatre companies, promises to be the most important factor in the future of American theatre. The pioneer program at the Cleveland Playhouse with the Fund supporting a two year repertory program, plus the grants to playwrights both for community theatre and Broadway theatre production of their plays will provide the testing ground for private subsidy of theatre.

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